Sugar prices and Tuteja Committee

468. SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been continuous increase in sugar prices;

(b) whether country's sugar output is likely to fall to 13.8 mt. during the previous fiscal;

(c) whether the Tuteja Committee for Restructuring of Sugar Industry has recommended that Government should withdraw itself from the release mechanism for free-sale sugar from October 1, 2005 and has suggested that regulated sugar industry should itself decide free-sale sugar quota for each month; and

(d) if so, the other steps Government propose to take to check increase of sugar prices and also implement suggestions made by the Tuteja Committee?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) The average retail price of sugar in four principal markets of the country went up in the early part of January, 2005, but declined in February, 2005.

(b) The sugar production in the country during the previous sugar season 2003-04 was 139.58 lakh tonnes (Provisional) as against an estimated production of 201.00 lakh tonnes in 2002-03 sugar season.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The Government's policy is to ensure availability of sugar at reasonable prices to consumers. Government have, *inter alia*, enhanced non-levy sugar quota for the quarter January-March, 2005 and announced increase in fulfilment of export obligation from 24 months to 36 months on import of raw sugar through Advance License Scheme.

Research centre for quality cotton

†469. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) the details of efforts being made by Government for the cultivation of world level quality cotton in the country;

(b) whether Government propose to establish a Cotton Research Centre in the country; and

(c) in what manner, the information about good quality varieties of cotton is transmitted to cotton flowers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) Under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR), All India Coordinated Cotton Improvement Project (AICCIP) and Central Institute for Research on Cotton Technology (CIRCOT) undertake research and testing for commercial release of world level quality cotton varieties and hybrids in the country. In addition, the Centrally sponsored Technology Mission on Cotton further strengthens various activities to improve cotton production, productivity and quality through Union Ministries of Agriculture and Textiles.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Farmers are provided information through Krishi Vigyan Kendras, frontline demonstrations in farmers' fields and training of farmers after which the State Extension Machinery takes over the work of extension.

Drought in Karnataka

470. SHRI K.B. KRISHNAMURTHY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it has come to the notice of Government that out of 176 taluks, 98 recorded below normal rainfall in Karnataka;

(b) if so, whether the Karnataka Government had sent any Memorandum seeking fresh assistance from Government;

(c) if so, the amount of financial assistance, sought for;